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Mom is Well and Happy Lessons from the South Indian state of Kerala

by William Alexander

Although India has more people than Europe, often we of the west are surprised to learn of the similar diversity of languages and cultures in that continent as in Europe. We don't expect the Greeks and the Finns to be alike. Likewise, we should not expect the Malayalam speaking people of Kerala to be the same as the citizens of Bengal. They are not.

Kerala faces the Arabian Sea. It is not big, about the size of Vancouver Island on the western edge of Canada. The population is dense, 30 million, larger than Canada. Kerala is warm and wet.

To one visiting as a tourist, Kerala may seem much like the rest of India. No one seems to be in a hurry. Compared with the rest of India, the airport, the railways, the taxis, the hotels and restaurants all look the same, etc., just as they would look the same to an Indian tourist in Europe. With a little sophistication you would be able to notice more Muslims, twice as common as in all India. Also there are more Christians, ten times more frequent than in all India. There are lots of Hindus too, 60 percent-add 20 percent Muslims and 20 percent Christians. The religions of others may be guessed by Malayalees. Many of the Muslims and Christians

were converts from among the Hindu untouchables years ago. Moreover, the Kerala Hindu culture contains significant differences from the rest of India.

With the exception of a few elderly, almost all Malayalees can read and write. In other places in India, about half are literate. In spite of their poverty the 30 million Malayalees do read. Although they are a bare four percent of the Indian population, they maintain more libraries than in all the rest of India put together, nearly 4000.

Good food and water combined with sanitation and medical care have produced long life. The average life span in Kerala is 72 years compared to 59 elsewhere in India. Even more dramatic is the comparison of Infant Mortality Rates (IMR), the number of children who do not live to their first birthday for each 1000 live births. The care a society can give to its children is a general measure of the availability of food, shelter and clothing needed by everyone.

In some African countries IMRs reach 150. In India the current IMR is 92. The Kerala IMR is 16, more than 5 times less. This is the same quality standard enjoyed in USA as late as 1970. Western medicine

has been accepted within the long Kerala tradition of ayurvedic and homeopathic healing. Much of the credit for the enviable Kerala health record belongs to the educated mothers with the necessary resources to properly feed and care for their families.

The Brahman teachers came into Kerala from the outside, bringing patriarchal practices with them. In Kerala the Brahmins established a small, exalted caste of priests with a special Kerala name, Nambudiri Brahmins. Partly to emphasize their special status and partly to keep their properties intact, only the oldest Nambudiri sons were permitted to marry and have their own children.

Throughout most of India when foreign observers arrived they found four castes with the Brahmins at the top. Since the priests apparently created the caste system, caste has been described as religious. In fact, caste is a rigid system dividing labor and allocating privileges, that is, an economic system, the exploitation of the labor of the many by the few. Subordinate to the Brahman priests, there was a warrior-ruler caste, next a farmer-trader-artisan caste, and then the lowest caste group, the workers. Below all castes were the untouchables, those without any caste status at all, mind-washed slaves.

It appears that in the absence of the usual four castes, the Nambudiri Brahmins accepted a part of the worker caste (Sudras) to serve them as warriors and administrators. This role allocation created a caste special to Kerala called Nairs. As part of the original peoples of Kerala which had not adopted patriarchy, the women of the Nair households had a special status. These women governed their households and held all family property. This female status has been described as matriliney, distinct from matriarchy. Men acting for the women managed the properties and politics outside of the household.

The status of women in the Nair household may have been reinforced by the rigid patriarchy of the Nambudiri Brahmins. Sexual liaisons between the unmarried sons of the Nambudiri Brahmins and Nair women were established and maintained. The children of such unions belonged to the Nair

woman and her household, not to their biological fathers. As children of a Nair woman, they were proper Nairs. Only a few Nair households had the status of continuing connections with Brahman households, since the Brahmins were few and the Nairs were a large caste. Some Nairs gained privileged roles under the Brahman sponsorship, but most Nair men survived by directly cultivating the lands owned by their mothers, wives or sisters.

The persistence of matriliney within the high status of Nairs doubtless helped to establish and maintain a female status norm in the daily life of the whole society. Right up into the 20th century matriliney has been practiced by Muslims, and the Christians frequently allowed female inheritance. The patrilineal English law brought to India by the British raj in the 19th century has been destructive of Nair family institutions.

The alliance of the matrilineal Nairs and patriarchal Brahmins served the interest of both. The Brahmins attended to their priestly duties and the Nairs managed the worldly affairs beyond the temples. The priests made a sharp distinction between the Nairs and the remaining caste workers (Sudras) given the caste name Ezhavas, in Kerala. For the Ezhavas, the denial of temple access reminded them of their humiliating caste bondage, inferior economic power and social status.

More than any other single cause, it was the exclusion of the Ezhavas along with all untouchables from Hindu temples which fired the revolt against caste oppression in the 20th century. Within the Hindu culture of Kerala, the numerous Ezhavas and the main body of untouchables chose to struggle for status as Hindus rather than convert to Christianity or Islam. The momentum of this Hindu revolt succeeded at the right time to seize the new instruments of democratic governments, a reluctant independence gift of the departing British.

Castes in Kerala and all India consist not of individuals but are aggregates of large family groups. Within large family groups, mothers are more important than individual workers. New western life-

styles emphasizing the importance of the individual as contrasted to the value of the family, and the western exaltation of work for pay outside of the family have eroded the role of the mother.

The theme of this essay, Moms are Well and Happy, refers to mothers of Kerala, not to the mothers of India beyond Kerala. Beyond Kerala, Indian women lack the independence, status and life quality of the mothers in Kerala. The subtitle of this story suggests that we may learn lessons in Kerala. Partly these lessons show how to make moms well, happy, and able to maintain family. Further, the Kerala lessons are about how we can live well in a future world, a world of less resources with more than twice as many people. Family and the loving attitudes within family are the most efficient institutions transforming limited Earth resources into life quality.

Lets move our focus from the family to the bigger society in which human families prosper. Worldwide, the new buzz word is sustainability. Sustainability is about the future of humans. I find sustainability a purposefully ambiguous word. Its ambiguity accounts for its popular use in political dialog. In an Earth-wide context, sustainability directs our attention both to our in-group drive for survival and to our other directed interest in the welfare of all humans and all other life.

For those who discover a finite Earth, sustainability becomes the common denominator of all life. For those who also believe humans are responsible for their own behavior, they must in all cases contain two characteristics, modest consumption and small family size. Looking about the Earth in 1989 we found only one large human population which clearly combines both sustainable human behavioral characteristics.

Enter the 30 million Malayalam speaking citizens of the South Indian state of Kerala. Quality of life measures in Kerala are equal to USA in 1970, completed family sizes are smaller than in USA, and incomes are too low to imagine. When Earth resources are short and people are many, Kerala of

today may be viewed as a likely scenario in which limited Earth resources are used with maximum efficiency to produce long life and conviviality within an open and democratic culture.

In the period 1990-1993, a total of 81 participant-observers from North America and Europe were guests for one month in rural Malayalee homes assisted full time by English speaking cultural guides. The purpose of this research effort was to sharpen meanings of the common words, wants and needs. We can define resource limits for wellness needs and societal needs, but psychological needs flow over into wants. Thinking of psychological needs as wants may exclude them from human entitlements. Wants may be allocated in a system of open competition, the market.

In the name of efficiency (and survival through the 21st century) we seek to reduce the Earth resource requirement of needs and wants. The question of the Earthwatch researches became, "How much of the Earth's resources are required for each human to fulfill needs and wants?"

The researchers tried to conceptualize the minimum amount of Earth resources required to maintain a long and healthy life. This means clean water, adequate food, clothing, housing, health care, and education. We called this basic minimum a wellness need. Next our concept of quality of life was elevated enough to assure future security adequate to motivate parents to choose small families. Since small families benefit society, we called this addition a societal need. Further there seemed to be a resource need for creativity (self actualization), a need spilling over into wants.

The 81 foreign observers had experienced life in many places and different ethnic settings. In their observation of the Malayalee life patterns of good health, long lives and high education, they did not find the Malayalees less happy, less contented or more fearful than the people of their own home places. Given the finding that needs and wants are satisfied in Kerala, we can relate the amounts of resources utilized in Kerala to other populations.

This conclusion put the foreign observers in the awkward position of trying to justify why larger amounts of Earth resources seem to be necessary in the first world countries of their experience. The measure commonly used to compare consumption between nations is Gross National Product per capita. Kerala is a little lower than the Indian average on this comparison. In order to explain the much higher quality of life measures in Kerala we will need to rely on the differences in modern history described below.

The obvious answer for the huge per capita resource consumption in USA (and other first world countries) also turns out to be the best explanation: Much larger amounts of resources are available. Perhaps we should announce a variation of Parkinson's Law: Human needs for the Earth's resources will expand to utilize the resources available. Those who understand the necessity for reducing consumption of resources in the first world countries will ask, Why are the Malayalees so efficient? That is, how have the Malayalees produced high life quality conditions using very small amounts of the Earth's resources?

The resources used by the Malayalees are limited by the amounts available to them. What we see in Kerala is the efficient use of limited resources producing high life quality. Limited amounts of the Earth resources available to humans will be the usual condition world wide by the middle of the 21st century. Modest use of the Earth's limited resources is sustainable human behavior.

Thoughtful visitors to Kerala, notice Kerala lifestyle differences. Except in areas for foreign tourists, visitors appreciate the absence of beggars and hustlers, notice the better quality of the homes and their distribution throughout the country side as contrasted to the bunching of houses in village India, and as they encounter the people, the strength and the independence of the women is noted. Contrasted to their experience in high consumption societies, visitors notice the slow, infuriatingly deliberate pace of task completion, in spite of repeated assurances and best intentions. Those ser-

vices requiring resources not readily available to all may never happen.

In the 19th century, the caste system in Kerala was the most restrictive in all India. The poorest in Kerala not only faced untouchability restrictions but also unapproachability and unseeability. Referring to them, Mahatma Gandhi observed in 1925, "Socially the Untouchables are lepers; economically they are worse; and religiously they are denied entrance to places which we miscall houses of God. They are denied the use of public roads, schools, hospitals, taps and parks. They get no social service. They are too downtrodden to rise in revolt against suppression."

The "revolt against their suppression" was underway as Gandhi wrote. By 1898 a low caste social reformer was organizing strikes of field workers seeking permission to use the public roads and market places, and demanding an opportunity for their children to attend school. Most significant of all was the organization of caste improvement associations among the Hindus and parallel efforts among the Muslims and Christians.

The caste associations brought together hundreds of sub-castes in the name of caste improvement, blurring the lines between sub-castes. Those experiencing fellowship across sub-caste boundaries found it easier to reach across caste boundaries. The Nairs and other relatively high caste improvement associations set up public "inter dining" events where high and low caste people would eat together, publicly violating a major religious taboo, sharing food together, a taboo symbolic of the economic disabilities suffered by the oppressed.

The Ezhavas, the large worker caste, was organized into the Ezhava Social Reform Movement. In addition to extensive self improvement within the caste, the movement sought the privilege of worship in Hindu temples for themselves and untouchables. The temple entry marches were protests involving thousands and extending over many years. The intensity and the staying power of this non-violent pressure produced the Temple Entry Act of 1936,

legally opening Travencore Hindu temples. This success was a most important event marking the transformation of 20th century Kerala. Those oppressed by religiously sanctioned economic disabilities had succeeded at the highest levels, religious and political, by their own action. They were empowered.

As India moved toward independence from Britain in 1945, several otherwise disparate forces joined into a synergistic unity demanding equality within Kerala. This was a union of democratic forces of Christians, Muslims, Gandhians, and Communists organizing the downtrodden of Kerala.

As was the case elsewhere in India, the Christians made converts among the untouchables with no caste advantages to lose. The London Missionary Society came to Kerala following the British invasions and performed a service establishing English medium Christian schools and colleges and teaching the rejection of caste as a heathen institution.

As the administrators and trading companies of the British raj arrived in Kerala they hired English speaking Malayalees as local supervisors. Many of these local supervisors had been trained in the Christian schools and colleges which treated untouchables as equals. In defense of their privileged positions in the economy of Kerala, the Brahmins and the Nairs accelerated the educational opportunity of their children adding English, mathematics and the sciences to the curriculum. Christian leadership built an early demand for universal education in Kerala. At the same time the Christians infused a new idea, "equality before God", among their untouchable converts.

On the criteria of income and education Muslims have long been below the Kerala standards. Like the Christians, the Muslims were also largely converts from among the untouchables, and like the Christians they were socially distant from the high caste Hindu power centers. The Muslim League has served as a caste improvement association in the past and is now a political party. Muslims did not experience empowerment until they shared in the

1957 Kerala election victory. The Muslims League has adroitly adjusted itself within the winning political coalitions led by communists and has profited much from the alliance.

Gandhi determined to strike hard at India's greatest sin, caste. As events turned out, the intense efforts of Gandhi and his disciples against caste disabilities were caught up in the struggle for independence from the British. Gandhi taught that Christians, Muslims and Hindus of all castes would unite in the struggle against British oppression. Gandhi's anti-caste disciples rushed with vigor and enthusiasm into the struggle against caste oppression in Kerala.

An incidental legacy of British imperialism was wage labor, the separation of labor from the products of labor, a basis for labor consciousness and communist political organization. Most labor union leaders in the few industries of Kerala were high caste radicals and communists. While Gandhi's Congress Party preached an end to untouchability, it was the communists who ate in the homes of the oppressed, organized drama clubs among them, undertook legal action on their behalf, and agitated for higher wages and a share of the land. An untouchable recalled events of 1951, "The influence of Communism brought a new life to my village. Some of the high caste Nairs became the spokesmen for this new ideology. The leaders of all castes conducted meetings in untouchable houses and slept there, thus actually doing away caste feeling in my village."

Kerala made international headlines when a communist dominated coalition came into power in the state's first parliamentary elections, in 1957. The chairman of the Kerala Communist Party became the chief minister, the first major success for communism in a free and democratic country. Against the background of 40 years of Stalinist suppression of free democratic processes, the success of communists in the open election of Kerala was surprising. Even more amazing, the proletarian majorities of Kerala retained to themselves power over their communist leadership, no dictatorship of the proletariat.

The communists assembled a huge proletarian majority, the untouchables, the Ezhavas, the Muslims, and some Christians. The suppressed of Kerala were empowered. A central role was played in the land reform and anti-caste struggle by the communists, who developed a reputation, even among their opponents, of being relatively honest and incorrupt. Communist parties have been voted into offices and become vital pillars of reformist governing coalitions several times in the last thirty years.

An unmeasured quality of life factor in Kerala is the vigorous democracy maintained by a politically sophisticated and active electorate, more than 90 percent of those old enough to vote. Democracy is an attempt to reconcile the natural phenomena of human diversity and the belief in human equality before God. In this vision of democracy, the Earth is seen as a human habitat owned by all humans on an equal share basis. A primary entitlement allows each a share of the Earth resources which may allow the basis for life quality, wellness needs. The secondary democratic entitlement offers each a fair opportunity to compete for the use of the available Earth resources. Democratic processes can create and maintain fair opportunities for this competition. Malayalee politics began with the empowering election of 1957.

Empowerment of a suppressed majority has two important political consequences. First, as the winners savor their victory they are motivated to vote again, to maintain and reinforce their victory. Second, the issues are defined. Any political opposition wanting to win in a subsequent election must support the winning issues. Names of candidates and party labels change, but the fundamental purpose of the government has been defined, to serve the interest of the electoral majority, in this case the formerly oppressed.

The winning platform of the 1957 government in Kerala eliminated public caste restrictions, especially economic discrimination and disabilities. Thinking about wellness needs and psyche wants, the adjustments and reassessments of status occurred as families and neighborhoods reached

across former caste boundaries supporting each other. The Kerala governments offered visible institutional support for these dramatic social and economic changes. Notable were the efforts supporting land reform, food distribution, health care and education.

An issue on which Muslims and Christians joined low-caste Hindus was the unfair tenancy rules. In an agrarian society, land control is a life necessity. Before 1969, 8 percent of the landowning households controlled 44 percent of all rented land and 62 percent of the best irrigated lands. The cultivators were in a difficult position. The cultivators' leases could be arbitrarily terminated by a class of middlemen or by the titled land owners. Exorbitant rents were usual. Sometimes cultivators paid at least 50 to 75 percent of the gross product of the land to landlords.

The communist government of 1957 included cabinet members who were seasoned militants of peasant and worker movements who were set on a course of radical land reform. In reaction, the landlords initiated political protests and within two years persuaded the New Delhi government to dismiss the communists. In the late sixties the tenants supported by communists took matters into their own hands, planting red flags on their tenancies and claiming the right to farm the land without paying rent. Pressure organized by the communists became so great that the Congress Party, representing the landlords, enacted the land reform law. The cultivators were allowed to buy the land they had historically farmed. For rice fields, the landlords were paid 16 times one year's fair rent value. The former landlords found new roles as teachers, government administrators and mid-sized farmers continuing to contribute to the Kerala economy. For the new owners of the rice paddies, half or more of their families' food needs were now assured.

A system of ration shops, a war-time measure established in 1941, has been vastly expanded. This system, now called fair price shops, offers rice, wheat, sugar, palm oil, and kerosene at controlled prices. The location of the 13,000 such shops within walk-

ing distance of every Kerala home contrasts with the assistance offered in the other progressive Indian states which only began to extend ration shops into rural areas in 1980. Each household receives a ration card allowing the purchase of limited amounts of basic commodities at fixed prices. All households purchase some items through this system, but the poorest buy two-thirds of their cereals through the fair price shops. Parallel free markets provide a full range of food stuffs but their prices are moderated by the competition of the fair price shops.

Studies carried out by the National Nutritional Monitoring Bureau of the Indian Council of Medical Research have consistently ranked Kerala lowest in food intake among Indian states. We should expect these low levels of per capita nutrient consumption to be associated with growth retardation and nutritional disorders. We are able to report, however, quite the opposite. The incidence of lack of protein has virtually disappeared along with lack of enough food.

Of all the explanations of healthy children, female education has the most direct connection. During the time period 1900 to date the female literacy has increased from about 5 percent to nearly 100 percent. Over the same 95 years the Infant Mortality Rates have declined from 240 to 16. The nutritional success of Kerala despite the meager food input is explained by more efficient food distribution and by more efficient utilization of the available nutrients in a positive interaction with effective health care. Kerala mothers are the principal mangers of both.

The governments of Kerala have supported the ayurvedic and homeopathic health systems while enthusiastically adopting cost effective western medical practice. Smallpox vaccination was undertaken in 1879, and by 1936 nearly everyone in southern Kerala was protected. Kerala was the first Indian state to entirely eradicate smallpox. Successful public health and educational measures have wiped out cholera and malaria, and in contrast to many parts of India, there has been no recurrence.

A lively private health care sector is backed by a comprehensive public sector offering services throughout Kerala. The superior female education levels are related to the excellent maternal understanding of health care services. As evidence of prenatal care in the state, 92 percent of births take place in public and private health care institutions, and breast feeding is nearly always practiced for the first six months. To the foreign visitor, the visiting nurse system is impressive.

As contrasted to many low income countries which have lavished limited public funds on universities, the funding in Kerala has been directed to primary and secondary education. This does not mean that higher education is neglected. There are 41 arts and sciences colleges with government support and 133 privately financed for a total of 174. In addition, there are 9 engineering colleges, 4 in the government sector and 5 private, and a host of polytechnic training institutes. There are more women than men enrolled in the colleges and universities, even in the engineering programs.

One of its important grass roots educational institutions is voluntary and independent of government. Eschewing both political party connections and foreign funding, the Kerala Science Literature Society involves hundreds of thousands of people. It popularizes science to serve the needs of society. Using street drama and other colorful methods the KSSP has brought useful science and technology into the everyday life of Kerala and provides leadership in environmental protection campaigns.

What is the short explanation of the sustainable human behavior in Kerala? Immediately we may think of a generous climate, superior education, high female status, or communist politics. Other explanations may occur: vigorous parliamentary democracy, Christian teaching, Gandhian philosophy, and land reform. I add my explanations: equity, elimination of caste, and consumption efficiency. Which is it? Actually it is all of the above. Serendipity best explains why Kerala is one of a kind in our time—modest consumption and small families.

Report on 1995 Community Service Conference: Conflict Resolution in Community

by Marilan Firestone

Community exists when people who are interdependent struggle with the traditions that bind them and the interests that separate them in order to realize a future that is an improvement upon the present.

Carl Moore

This definition of community given early in the conference illustrates the importance of conflict resolution and even of conflict in a community. This conference was fundamentally different from many sponsored by Community Service in previous years. Experiential learning was the modus operandi for the weekend long conference. Our guest facilitators, Julie Mazo and Marianne MacQueen, chose role playing, personal stories and group discussion over lectures and presentations.

Julie is a resident of Shannon Farm, Virginia, an intentional community. Her experience in conflict resolution spans three decades and she has served as mediator in hundreds of cases in academia, state bureaucracies, and national and local service organizations. Marianne MacQueen is an experienced mediator as well. She has served for several years as the coordinator of the Village Mediation Program for the Village of Yellow Springs and has a Master of Arts degree in Conflict Resolution from The McGregor School of Antioch College. Both women provide training to others in the skills of mediation and are dedicated advocates of collaborative approaches to solving differences.

The group consisted of approximately 30 enthusiastic people, mainly Ohioans with a few from Virginia, North Carolina and Tennessee. Athens County in Ohio was very well represented, as was Yellow Springs, of course.

On Friday evening we broke into small groups of 6 or 7 and each person offered an example of a real group conflict in which they had been involved. This process drew each of us personally into the

conference. Each group then chose two stories to take back and present to the larger group and to a panel consisting of Michael Lang and Máire Dugan co-chairs of the Antioch McGregor School Conflict Resolution Program, and Julie and Marianne. The panel examined the dynamics in each case and explored possible strategies that a mediator might employ. The conference participants became familiar with concepts and mediation skills that we would encounter again and act out many times throughout the weekend.

Saturday morning we performed an engaging, clever and most of all, fun exercise. We, the participants, became a make-believe town meeting. We were from the small town of Olympia with 4000 people and a growing tourist industry. Olympia was on the edge of a national forest and had a scenic river with a proposed bike path running along side of it. A group of concerned citizens had proposed a plan in which four vacant buildings would be demolished and recreational green spaces would be put in their place. Parking would be significantly reduced by transforming four downtown streets into a pedestrian mall. In this make-believe town a fist-fight had recently broken out between the supporters of "Olympia for Locals" and those who believe that "Tourism is Tops for Olympia." When we assembled on Saturday morning, Julie Mazo distributed a paper to each of us describing the town, the scenario and a sketchy review of the different interests in the town. In addition, and this part made it a most effective exercise, fourteen of the participants were assigned a particular character/personality with particular interests to defend. These were assigned randomly and in writing so that the meeting and issues unfolded naturally. Julie introduced herself as a mediator that was appointed by the Town Council to facilitate this meeting, called with the hope of airing views and cooling tempers.



The skills and strategies that were illustrated the night before were acted out and expanded upon: finding commonalities as people were given time to state their vision for the town, giving each person a chance to "vent" by allotting time for people on each "side" to speak their case, moving on to tactics that encouraged both sides to really listen to others' point of view, reframing the conflict, acknowledging the power of personal stories and identifying the underlying needs of individuals.

Just before the end of this "Town Meeting" we briefly explored a common conflictual issue. It was the perception of one of the "characters" that for all of the airing of viewpoints and acknowledging of each others needs, the "people in power" were going to forward their own agenda anyway. One conference participant saw things differently and wondered just what was meant by "power" and if by even holding this viewpoint one gives away one's power. It did not seem appropriate or useful to debate this matter, only to pause and reflect on the depth of the issues of trust in our communities.

The Saturday afternoon session gave conference participants an opportunity to test drive their mediating skills. We again broke into small groups. The groups held mock meetings and gave as many participants as possible a chance to act as facilitator (mediator). Many of the people expressed that they "got a lot out of this part of the conference".

This was all very hard work and the payoff came quickly. Julie reminded us before we left that while our focus was on facilitating conflicted groups, we took with us generic skills that can be used in our personal lives.

The evening brought relief from all of the hard work as Linden Qualls led us in non-competitive games. These activities were very well received, invigorating and at times hilarious.

Some folks had to leave early for long drives home, but those who stayed for the Sunday evaluation session found it helpful too. We went around the circle, facilitated by Pete Hill from Gloucester, Ohio,

saying what we particularly liked about the conference, what we learned and what might be done differently another time. We felt we learned a great deal from Julie Mazo and Marianne MacQueen about dealing with conflicts, such as allowing each side to present its point of view for 10 minutes and reversing roles, and arguing the other person's point of view.

We were also very appreciative of Linden Qualls' non-competitive games and hope that such games can be interspersed throughout future conferences. The spontaneous singing led by Georgi Schmitt with her guitar on Saturday afternoon during free time, the excellent meals prepared by Cheryl Singleton and the banana "ice cream" provided by attendee Victor Eyth were also acknowledged. Though we would like to have had more literature on conflict resolution available and a chance to be outside more, we came away feeling it was a valuable, friendly learning experience.

We were happy to see old friends and to make new ones. We were sorry some of you were unable to attend.



Letter from Mitraniketan

Mitraniketan is now entering into the 40th year of its founding and is reviewing both the strong and weak points of the work done and the result achieved so far. We also aim to prepare a ten year perspective action plan for the future, to reach the fifty years, golden jubilee of Mitraniketan. We feel that what we have gained from these years of effort is to promote a holistic approach to development and education with the main emphasis on economic, environmental, ecological, cultural and political development.

Mere materialistic approach to gain wealth and power is corroding the minds of people even in the third world countries which try to ape the Industrial prosperity of the West. This causes a heavy erosion of human values, which means loss of ethics and morality, and results in environmental degradation. We are trying our best to make Mitraniketan a very effective center to launch a movement in the country by upholding human values and at the same time promoting economic justice.

If rural people are not alerted and equipped for self help and mutual help, the liberalization and privatization policy of our government for mere economic prosperity is going to have a bull-dozing effect on the domestic front. Globalization, due to fast growing technical and scientific development, definitely will continue to have its effect on individuals and society, about which we are also aware. Merely being aware is not enough; we must move forward with preparedness and determination, while using this swift current of change as to where and how we should reach. We know it is a stupendous task for which we need to gather courage and strength along with a sense of purpose and direction. Voluntary organizations today are facing this challenge. It is here we need support from the first world, where there are organizations and individuals with strong commitment to other alternatives for a saner world. They have already experienced the negative aspect of materialism and multinational tactics which lead to extreme individualism and

corrosion of ethical, moral and other human values which lead to environmental and other forms of pollution. The developing world is in a very dangerous situation under the pretext of modernization as prompted by economic development at the expense of everything else. Even the practice of democracy is faltering with lust for centralized power and money.

Unless there is popular mass awakening through opportunities for group interaction, with the primary concern to sensitize people at the lower and middle levels to enable them to make decisions and to participate, present practice may not help and we shall become victims of circumstance as already we are. We want strong global support with mutual trust and understanding. The relevance of Dr. Arthur E. Morgan, Mahatma Gandhi, Tagore and other contemporary thinkers and doers comes to my mind. At that time we had far-sightedness in all such matters. We need united local, national and global action from all those who are on the same wave length (regardless of caste, creed, color or nationality) to consolidate their efforts for solidarity, durable peace and justice. We need to discipline ourselves to pave the way for a need based family and community rather than greed based. As it is now, we are bringing disaster to our posterity and to the future, as we are overexploiting and overspending the earth's resources.

With these thoughts we gratefully remember Dr. Arthur E. Morgan, Community Service and all other well wishers, and friends of Mitraniketan. Thank you all for the moral and material support we have been receiving all through the past years and which enabled us to become what we are today. We look forward to greater ties and much closer cooperation and fellowship for the coming years, to become a powerful instrument for local, national and global change in a positive direction.

Viswanathan, for Mitraniketan, Kerala, India



THE ARDEN TOUR

by Harry Hyde Jr.

Concerned Citizens of the Delaware Valley (CCDV) in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania, sponsored a guided tour of Arden, DE, on Sunday, 16 July, 1995, in cooperation with the Delaware Valley Chapter, Social Democrats (SD) USA, and the Sustainable Society Action Project (SSAP). The tour was conducted by Mike Curtis, director of the Henry George School of Social Science (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania), assisted by several Arden community volunteers.

Arden is a planned intentional community founded in 1900 on Henry George's basic "single tax" principles of land-value taxation as expounded in his 1879 book, *Progress and Poverty*. It is an incorporated village of about 600 population in the Wilmington suburban area (New Castle County), 1.8 miles northwest of Claymont and southwest of the Delaware-Pennsylvania state line, and 4.5 miles northeast of Wilmington.

Arden is the only entire municipality on the National Register of Historic Places. Some historic sections of cities and towns are on the Register, but Arden is the only entire municipality. It was selected for the Register in 1973 for several reasons, including its uniqueness among intentional (sometimes called "utopian") communities. While almost all other such communities, New Harmony, and New Jersey's several Jewish *shtetls*, either failed or lost their original orientation, Arden is still viable after 95 years and still adheres to basic Henry George principles.

Arden and two newer and smaller contiguous neighbors (Ardencroft and Ardentown) in effect form one "Greater Arden" community, the Ardens, with a combined population of about 1,200. However, each is a separate municipality; specifically, an incorporated village. This is one feature that sets each of the Ardens apart from most Wilmington suburbs. Except for a few older towns such as New Castle and Newark, Wilmington suburbs (like most

of the newer Philadelphia suburbs) are unincorporated; they receive municipal services from New Castle County (just as unincorporated Philadelphia suburbs receive municipal services from townships; but, unlike Pennsylvania and New Jersey, Delaware does not have townships). Each of the Ardens is organized on basic Henry George principles, although there are some technical differences in municipal administration.

The Delaware State Constitution prohibits land-value taxation, so the Arden founders did an end run through a land trust. Almost all privately owned land within the village is owned by the trust (administered by lifetime trustees with replacements elected by residents) and leased to homeowners, mostly residents plus a few landlords. Each leaseholder owns the dwelling and other buildings on her/his parcel of land, but not the land itself. Some residents rent from leaseholders. Each leaseholder, whether a resident or a landlord, pays land rent to the trust. Again, this is based only on the (assessed) land value of the land, regardless of the presence or absence of buildings on it. This land rent is the equivalent of what he/she would pay in taxes if land-value taxation were permitted. The trust in turn pays county and school taxes on the totality of its land throughout the village, and pays the equivalent of a local tax to the municipality, the Village of Arden.

Land rent for a vacant lot is the same as that for an adjoining equal-size plot with buildings and other improvements. Land speculation is thereby discouraged, and homeowners are not penalized for adding improvements. This is one of the key features of Henry George's land-value taxation. Modifications of this principle are in effect in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and 15 other Pennsylvania cities. But, in all of the United States, the Ardens are the only municipalities in which there is no local tax on buildings.

Of libertarian interest, Arden has only minimal government and places major emphasis on voluntary cooperation in the spirit of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1845) and Petr Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*

(1902). Instead of an elected municipal council, there is the "direct democracy" of New England-style town meetings in which all residents may participate. There are only two municipal paid employees, a secretary and a treasurer, both are part time. Land values are set by an assessment board elected by postal ballot and the Hare system of proportional representation. In this case, all abstentions and non-votes are counted with "no" votes as negative. Most work of running the community is handled by volunteers through several committees. Active community involvement is a major part of the Arden culture, both as voluntary surrogate in lieu of formal municipal services and for more numerous "extracurricular" activities such as arts, crafts, dances, drama, lectures, music, etc.

"Sense of community" distinguishes the Ardens from surrounding suburbs. The three contiguous villages are characterized in *The Arden Book* as "verdant islands in a sea of suburban sprawl." People who do not care for the lack of local identity in suburban sprawl are likely to find Arden refreshingly different. Most suburban sprawl seems to fit Gertrude Stein's words, "When you get there, there is no 'there' there." But, when the people on the tour arrived at Arden, they are more inclined to say, "When you get there, there *is* a 'there' there": community identity, with a sense of place.

Arden is different from suburban sprawl in another way. Quite often, in suburban sprawl of comparable affluence, there is an obvious emphasis on conspicuous consumption, with houses seeming to shout "Here lives a wealthy man!" Most Ardenites probably have professional, middle-management, or small-business incomes, but they do not shout affluence. Houses look more simple, often with an English country architecture. In fact, Arden was named for the forest of Arden in Warwickshire, England; site of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

Much of Arden is old-shade woodland, with trees on virtually all residential plots and public commons, plus a buffering greenbelt influenced by city planner Ebenezer Howard in *Garden Cities of To-*

morrow, and as advocated by the U.S. Resettlement Administration with Greenbelt, MD. as prototype.

Narrow blacktop residential avenues, and a few separate public thoroughfare pedestrian walkways, snake around trees in contrast to the old checkerboard grid pattern that is making a comeback among some of the newer community planners and developers. The Arden avenues have narrow grassy shoulders and are without curbs, sidewalks and streetlights. The speed limit is 20 mph except along Harvey Road, a state highway, where it is 25 mph. Natural drainage swales and French drains are used instead of storm sewers.

Community identity is reinforced on the perimeter by a greenbelt buffer and, in the "center of town," by what the Montgomery County (PA) Planning Commission calls a "focal point"—the "there' there" in Stein's words; ideally a civic/cultural and commercial center with one or more community buildings, such as a post office, town hall, firehouse, library, stores, and at least one house of worship.

Here Arden falls somewhat short of the ideal: its focal point, on "The Highway" (actually a local street), consists of the Buzz Ware Village Center and the Gild Hall (venue for town meetings and many local activities)—but no stores: the only business is the Arden Steakhouse about a quarter mile away. The nearest houses of worship are in and around Claymont and Wilmington. Community identity is reinforced, however, by its incorporated municipal status, while most other nearby localities are unincorporated. In years past Arden had its own post-office and a train station. Now Arden is linked to Wilmington via buses and the destination sign reads "Arden." Still another facet of community identity is a local monthly magazine or newspaper, the *Arden Page*.

Participating members and friends of CCDV returned from the tour with improved knowledge about a longtime, viable and historically interesting planned intentional community here in the Delaware Valley, and a better understanding of Henry George's principles of land-value taxation.

Readers Write

On Community Service Conference

As always, we find it impossible to get away in October to attend Community Service's wonderful conferences. (Our Bed & Breakfast business has been booked solid through October.) This conference in particular sounds great; "Conflict Resolution in Community". We do hope it's well-attended, just wish we could be there too. I'm on a committee pursuing the idea of establishing a dispute resolution center here in Hocking County--so I will be looking forward to your writeup in the Newsletter.

After reading about the "Neighborly Exchange in Yellow Springs" in the Jan-March newsletter, I wrote to Laurie Dreamspinner, as I am very much interested in this Exchange.

Barbara Holt, S. Bloomingville, OH

Thank you for the wonderful work you did for the Conflict Resolution workshop last week end. I hope to participate in more of your activities and learn from your organization and your members.

Louise Paulsen, Mason, OH

We anticipate opportunity to attend future gatherings. We are especially interested in viable possibilities in elder living in community, rather than "long-term care" proposed living offered to us (*not solicited by us*). Time certainly is of essence isn't it.

Betty Alexander, Davisburg, MI



Announcements

Raven Rocks Christmas Trees

These fine trees grown by our members at Raven Rocks community near Beallsville, Ohio will be for sale around the 2nd of December in Columbus at the Great Southern Shopping Center, where South High Street intersects Route 270. They will also be available in the Wheeling, WV area at the Big Bear Plus store on National Rd., in Bridgeport, Ohio. The sale of these trees grown with TLC helps pay off the debt on the thousand acres Raven Rockers are saving from strip mining.

1996 Members' Directory

This is a reminder to members who are in the Members' Directory and those new members who wish to be on it to let us know right away if there needs to be a change in your listing or if you, as a new member of Community Service, wish to be in it.

Please send your corrections or new entry by January 15th. Entries should be brief, telling of one's major interests, abilities and giving one's name, address and phone in no more than 45 words.

This Directory will only go to those members who have chosen to be in it and it will only be used for networking, not for solicitations of any kind.

Special Holiday Offer

If you have friends, relatives or co-workers who you think might like to receive our Newsletter we are offering two new subscriptions/memberships for the price of one through this December. Just send us the names and addresses of the two people you wish to introduce to our work of community building, and a check for \$25, and we will enter each of them as a member/subscriber. They will receive our quarterly Newsletter in 1996 starting with the January-March issue. We will drop them a card letting them know of your introductory gift.

Green Holidays!

If the holiday includes giving gifts, choose presents that help the environment or teach about nature. Birdfeeders made from recycled milk jugs or juice containers, recycled stationery, reusable shopping bags and other "green" gifts are fun to give and receive, and they help the planet! Better yet, get your family to agree that all the gifts you exchange be homemade. Or offer services, like babysitting, house cleaning or garden weeding.

Some holidays include rituals that actually hurt the environment. It is important to recognize them and see how they can be changed.

Did you ever think about how many trees are cut down during the Christmas season? More families are choosing to buy living Christmas trees grown in pots. They are smaller, but can be planted in front of your house, school, church or temple after Christmas. If you *are* buying a cut tree, make sure your Christmas tree comes from a tree nursery [like Raven Rocks], not out of our national forests (ask your tree salesperson, or look at the tag on the tree). You can also make it a tradition to plant two saplings (young trees) each spring after Christmas as a gift for the Earth.

Keep the Earth in mind when making out your Chanukah and Christmas lists. Ask your family and friends for gifts that contain little or no plastic (the plastic in toys is almost never recyclable). Choose a holiday, and ask for all your gifts to be "recycled" – things people already own! You might be surprised at the awesome toys, games, sports equipment, clothes and books that people have at home. Remember, when it comes to saving natural resources, USED IS GOOD NEWS!

by Nicole Anderson Ellis
from July/Aug. issue of *Friends of the Earth*



Community Service Open House and Holiday Fair

For those of you who live near enough to come, we remind you we will have our 10th annual open house and holiday fair the first Saturday in December, December 2nd, this year. This is a great time to pick up new and almost new books and other recycled items for gifts.



Madison Community Co-op Seeks Maintenance Coordinator

Madison Community Cooperative, an expanding housing cooperative with 9 properties, seeks an organized, motivated individual with professional experience in at least two of the following areas: plumbing, electrical, carpentry, or HVAC. Strong interpersonal communication skills and enthusiasm about co-ops a must.

Individual will be expected to oversee budgeted maintenance projects, hire and oversee a small worker group, hire contractors, handle maintenance emergencies, and attend some meetings. The full-time position pays \$10-14 per hour including benefits depending on skills and experience and begins May 1st, 1996. Send resume and cover letter by January 15, 1996 to: David Kohli, 437 W. Johnson St., Madison, WI 53703.

Land trusts are the fastest growing segments of the conservation movement, according to the annual report of the Land Trust Alliance. Today there are 1,100 land trusts in the U.S., over three times as many as twenty years ago. Land trusts have helped protect more than four million acres—1,300,000 acres in the last 4 years.

As the federal government withdraws from its protective environmental role, it is more important than ever that we, the people, undertake to preserve the land.



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Membership

Membership is a means of supporting and sharing the work of Community Service. The Basic \$25 annual membership contribution includes a subscription to our quarterly Newsletter and 10% off Community Service-published literature. Larger contributions are always needed, however, and smaller ones will be gladly accepted. Community Service is a nonprofit corporation which depends on contributions and the sale of literature to fund its work so that it can offer its services to those who need them. All contributions are appreciated, needed and tax-deductible. Due to added postage costs, foreign membership, including Canada, is \$30 in U.S. currency.

Have Your Friends Seen The Newsletter?

Please send the names and addresses of your friends who might enjoy receiving a sample Newsletter and booklist. If you wish specific issues sent, please send \$1 per copy.

Editor's Note

We welcome letters to the editor (under 300 words) and articles (700-2000 words) about any notable communities or people who are improving the quality of life in their communities. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish the article returned. The only compensation we can offer is the satisfaction of seeing your words in print and knowing you have helped spread encouraging and/or educational information.

Editor's Note #2

We occasionally exchange our mailing list with a group with similar purposes, such as the Arthur Morgan School at Celo or Communities Magazine. If you do not wish us to give your name to anyone, please let us know.

Address Change

If there is an error on your mailing label, or you are moving, please send the old label and any corrections to us. It increases our cost greatly if the Post Office notifies us of moves, and you will not receive your newsletter promptly.

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*You can tell when your Community Service membership expires by looking at the month and year in the upper left corner of your mailing label. Please renew your membership if it has expired or will expire before 12/95.
The annual membership contribution is \$25. We do not send individual reminders to renew.*

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